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ABSTRACT

This evaluation of two programs of materials used in introductory French classes tests two basic hypotheses: (1) pretests are good predictors of subsequent French achievement at the junior high school level, and (2) students in different programs will achieve to the same degree on a final French test. Results of the groups using the "audiolingual" texts "Cours Elementaire de Francais" and "El Espanol al Dia" are compared with the results of the experimental groups using the Encyclopaedia Britannica's "Je Parle Francais" and "La Familia Fernandez," both considered "audiolingual-visual" texts. The problem, experimental procedures, statistical analysis, and results and conclusions are presented. Results favor the use of materials which correlate audiolingual and visual materials in classroom presentation. (RL)

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A COMPARISON OF AN AUDIO-LINGUAL PROGRAM AND AN AUDIO-LINGUAL-VISUAL PROGRAM FOR BEGINNING FRENCH INSTRUCTION IN GRADE EIGHT

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Introduction

During the school year 1968-69, the Foreign Language Department of the Wissahickon School District, Ambler, Pa., gave much time and thought at in-service meetings to the evaluation of textbooks and methodologies dealing with foreign language study on the secondary level. The language teachers, in theory, were committed to an audio-lingual approach to teaching the modern foreign languages. Yet, in practice, many of the teachers felt that the so-called audio-lingual textbooks being used in the classrooms were only updated traditional ones. With language programs in French and Spanish beginning in grade eight, the teachers wanted programs that would bring enjoyment and success to the eager-to-learn students.

When the Pennsylvania Studies[1] came to the district's attention, the language department was surprised to find out that one of the project's traditional textbooks was D. C. Heath's *Cours Elementaire de Français,* second edition. It was the "audio-lingual" third edition of this textbook that was being used with beginning French students at both junior high schools in grade eight. The Spanish classes were using D. C. Heath's *El Español Al Dia.* Both the French and the Spanish textbooks were being questioned as the best vehicles for beginning language programs because of the lengthy vocabulary lists and grammatical analyses.

The Problem

In an effort to better meet the needs of the students and develop language courses that would make both the theoretical and practical applications of the department's philosophy possible, it was agreed upon by the teachers and the district's administrators to use and evaluate another kind of audio-lingual program on a pilot program basis for the 1969-70 school year. The department selected *Encyclopedia Britannica's Je Parle Français* and *La Familia Fernandez* with their audio-lingual-visual approaches, since, according to many researchers, there is a positive indication that the visual adjunct in teaching a foreign language provides

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language-in-culture experiences and psychological values which give the student the opportunity to identify with what he sees.[2]

Procedures

In examining the teachers' rosters it was discovered that one of the junior high French teachers who had attended the *Encyclopedia Britannica's* two-day orientation workshop was scheduled for two typical French sections in grade eight. A controlled pilot project involving his two beginning French classes was set-up to compare the Audio-Lingual with the Audio-Lingual-Visual approach. The primary purpose of this comparison would be to determine which instructional materials brought about the greater achievement at the end of the students' first year of language study. By using one teacher for both classes the question of teacher variation was eliminated.

A questionnaire to measure student attitudes[3] (Table 1) was distributed at the beginning of the year, and classroom goals and activities (as suggested in both textbook prefaces) were discussed at this time also. A similar attitude questionnaire was given out at the end of the year to the students. A predictor, *The Modern Language Aptitude Test, Form A*, was administered in September. Student I.Q. scores on the *Lorge-Thorndike Test* were obtained from the students' permanent record cards. *Gates-McGinite Reading Tests* were administered during the 1969-70 school year and used as a pre-experimental measure of English ability. The students were given identical French proficiency tests by sections at the end of the year to measure final achievement. The final test was made up by the pilot project teacher and another junior high French teacher in the district who had also volunteered to use the Audio-Lingual-Visual approach with an eighth grade section. It was decided that no standardized test would be purchased since the two teachers were familiar with both textbooks and would be able to design a final test that would control vocabulary and grammar content.[4] The final test included not only a written section testing mastery of vocabulary and grammatical items but also a dictation and a listening comprehension section. The results would indicate if pre-tests are good predictors of subsequent achievement in a junior high situation. Basic hypotheses included:

1. Pre-tests are good predictors of subsequent French achievement at the junior high level.
2. Students in different programs will achieve the same on a final French test.

Statistical Analyses

The statistical analyses of the two hypotheses were done at the Center for Foreign Language Research at West Chester State College. The multiple regression analyses, the correlations, and the analysis of covariance were done on an IBM 360-30 computer system.

A *multiple regression analysis* takes known pre-experimental information and a final measure and searches for meaningful relationships among them. It develops equations which show which pre-experimental information could have predicted subsequent student achievement.

The *analysis of covariance* adjusts groups on a meaningful pre-experimental measure to compensate for initial differences which might favor one group. Then, a comparison is made on a final measure which is more likely to reflect true gain pre-post than a single final measure.

IQ was identified as contributing most to French achievement by the regression analysis of Table 3 and was used as a covariate (adjustment) for the analysis of covariance reported in Table 4.

Results and Conclusions

Correlations among all the data (Table 2) show: (1) that age does not relate significantly to French achievement at this level of instruction; (2)that the IQ and the MLAT scores are significantly related to the vocabulary section of the *Gates-McGinite Reading Tests* that the students were given during the 1969-70 school year; and (3) that only the IQ and the *McGinite* vocabulary scores (probably both intelligence measures) significantly related to the final achievement scores.

The figures in Table 3 should be quite useful in establishing criteria for sectioning students into language sections. The Multi-Regression Analyses clearly establish the *Lorge-Thorndike* IQ score as the best predictor of language achievement for this group. It also shows the MLAT is not a good predictor for these eighth grade students. Future studies might utilize the elementary school version of the Aptitude test (EMLAT).

The second hypothesis to be tested was whether the students in the two programs achieved the same on the final French proficiency test. Table 4 clearly shows that both textbooks with their particular approaches were equally effective and that there was no difference between groups on the final French proficiency test.

The results of the attitude questionnaires were tabulated in terms of the 18 attitude words that the students were to weigh. From September to May, both groups reacted more negatively to 15 of the attitude words and weighted 3 words the same or higher. It can be noted, however, that the positive words "alive", "enjoy", "easy", "organized", and "fair" were given more support by the Audio-Lingual-Visual group, a fact which might support the pilot project teacher's opinion that the students in the Audio-Lingual-Visual *(Encyclopedia Britannica)* program seemed more attentive and more responsive in the classroom than did the Audio-Lingual *(D. C. Heath)* group.

Practical Evaluation

Unfortunately, final testing and data did not measure classroom interest nor atmosphere. The total pilot project included two other teach-

Table 1

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This scale is an attempt to get your general impression about the study of foreign language. There is no right or wrong feeling or impression. Your responses on this scale will not be used by the teacher to determine your grades.

You will see that on each line there are two words, such as:

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
intelligent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	stupid

Between these two words are seven spaces, and somewhere between the two words (or extremes) is your impression about something. If you were asked your impression about television news programs, you might check as follows:

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
		X						
intelligent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	stupid

but if you were asked your impression about your teachers, you might check somewhere else. In some cases you may not have a feeling one way or the other, in which case you would place an "X" in the middle space (number 4).

For each pair of words on this scale, place an "X" in the position between 1 and 7 that best fits your impression about . . .

THE STUDY OF FRENCH THIS YEAR

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
dull	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	exciting
lifeless	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	alive
boring	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	interesting
enjoy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	dread
like	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	dislike
least	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	most
necessary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	unnecessary
hard	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	easy
meaningless	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	meaningful
important	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	unimportant
unsuccessful	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	successful
discouraging	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	rewarding
worthless	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	valuable
fair	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	unfair
practical	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	impractical
inexact	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	exact
certain	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	uncertain
disorganized	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	organized

Table 2

Intercorrelations (N = 26)

	Mean	*S.D.*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*
1. Age, mos.	165.4	5.3	—.19	—.15	—.11	—.24	—.06	—.28	—.03
2. IQ	112.2	9.6	——	—.37	.68**	.43	.00	.48*	.56**
3. MLAT	29.7	10.8		——	.39*	.20	.15	.21	.36
4. McG-Vocab.	55.5	7.7			——	.20	.24	.63**	.42*
5. McG-Comp.	51.8	9.2				——	.07	.37	.24
6. McG-Speed	16.8	4.2					——	.62**	.06
7. McG-Accur.	15.3	3.3						——	.15
8. Fr. Prof. Test	36.8	11.8							——

*r = .39, p < .05 **r = .50, p < .01

Table 3
Regression Analyses, Predictors of French Achievement

Variable	*Coefficient*	*Beta*	*% Variance*
1. Age, mos.	.075	.033	.10
2. IQ	.613	.500	27.96
3. MLAT	.163	.149	5.30
4. McG-Vocab.	.318	.206	8.71
5. McG-Comp.	—.078	—.060	—.1.44
6. McG-Speed	.025	.009	.05
7. McG-Accur.	—.078	—.219	—3.37

Constant Term —51.147
Multiple Correlation Coefficient = .608*
Coefficient of Multiple Determination = .370
*p .05

Table 4
Comparison of Instructional Groups: D. C. Heath Textbook vs. Encyclopedia Britannica Textbook
Analysis of Covariance

Covariate: IQ Test Score
Criterion: French Proficiency Test

Group	*N.*	*IQ Test Mean*	*French Test Mean*	*French Test Adj. Mean*
D. C. Heath	16	111.75	54.19	53.98
Encyclopedia Britannica	10	110.20	48.00	48.33
Variation	*D/F*	*Sm. Sqs.*	*Mean Sq.*	*F-Ratio*
Between	1	195.31	195.31	
Within	23	20409.89	887.39	.22
Total	24	20605.20	858.55	

N.B. The F-Ratio is not significant

ers evaluating the Audio-Lingual-Visual approach with eighth grade classes. In all, three French sections and one Spanish section used the Audio-Lingual-Visual programs. For the language teacher and not the statistician, a few comments are included which reflect the opinions of the three language teachers and a number of the language students using the Audio-Lingual-Visual programs:

> "The films and filmstrips are so structured that they increase the opportunities for speaking the language and, at the same time, using meaningful dialog in class." (Spanish teacher)
>
> "By watching the filmed lessons and following the actors, the students are reacting automatically to drills and other activities." (French teacher)
>
> ". . . The course was presented in a clever way. It made it fun to learn and intrigued us to pay attention to see what went on in the dialogs." (Excerpt from an English theme written in the spring by a Spanish student)

Impact of the Study

As a result of the pilot project, the Foreign Language Department in the fall of 1970 began the Audio-Lingual-Visual programs in French and Spanish in selected sections of the eighth grade in both junior high schools. Teachers are planning to expand the program to include all language classes except for the atypical accelerated classes which will continue to use the D. C. Heath programs. The decision by the language teachers at both junior high schools to utilize the *Encyclopedia Britannica* programs was made with the conscious knowledge that the *D. C. Heath* materials would have to be reintroduced in ninth grade to permit articulation with the senior high school language programs. In a final analysis of the study's results, the Coordinator of Foreign Languages for the district recommended that serious consideration should be given to the continued use of the Audio-Lingual-Visual programs with those students whose learning styles can be best accommodated by such an approach.

[1] Philip D. Smith, Jr., *A Comparison of the Cognitive and Audiolingual Approaches to Foreign Language Instruction-The Pennsylvania Foreign Language Project* (Phila.: Center for Curriculum Development, 1970).

[2] James Dale Miller, *The Visual Adjunct in Foreign Language Teaching* (Phila.: Center for Curriculum Development, 1965).

[3] Philip D. Smith, Jr., *op. cit.*

[4] Burton L. Grover, "Course Evaluation on the Local Level," *Educational Leadership,* (March 1970), 591-96.